



Empowering Boone & Winnebago County

A Project to Reduce Poverty Through A Community  
Wide Comprehensive Approach

## Project Team

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## About the aha! Process

aha! Process is an award-winning training and publishing company providing workshops, publications, and consulting services to help improve lives and build sustainable success in communities, schools, and higher education. We do this by creating an understanding of the dynamics that cause and maintain poverty from the individual to systems level.

Poverty, middle class, and wealth are about an abundance or lack of resources. Our work helps individuals, businesses, students, and communities build resources for a more successful, sustainable future.

You can guess where we got our name from. Our company was originally RFT Publishing Co., but so many people told us how our work gave them an “aha” moment - that sudden clarity when all the pieces fit together - that we changed our name. We strive to build those moments for you, helping you gain a broader, deeper understanding of economic class and how it impacts your work, your community, and your life.

Rebuilding Lives, Transforming Our Community

# One Body Collaboratives

## About One Body Collaboratives

One Body Collaboratives is built on the concept of collaboration and has an original mission to unite the Christian Churches to collaboratively work together. In addition to our 100+ Network Partner Churches, representing over 20 denominations; we also have over 40 local ministries and 120 local service agencies within our referral network. We are well versed on creating collaborations within our community to meet needs of families in crisis.

The primary way we meet needs in the community is through our Resource Coordination Center, which is a phone-based ministry. Callers are referred by agencies, nonprofits, ministries and churches. Because of our vast referral network and partnerships, we are able to meet over 88% of the needs referred to us annually. The needs that we meet, and the resource provided impact over 500 local families in crisis annually.

Bridges Out of Poverty is a national antipoverty organization that helps people move toward upward mobility. The focus of Bridges is on socioeconomic class differences, and helping people understand the importance of these factors and how they are related to their lives.

## Vision

Reducing the social costs of poverty, strengthening the workforce, and building a more prosperous and sustainable community are goals on which most communities agree. aha! Process's Bridges Out of Poverty community support program provides a family of concepts, workshops, and products to help employers, community organizations, social service agencies, and individuals address and reduce poverty in a comprehensive way. Bridges brings people from all sectors and economic classes together to improve job retention rates, build resources, improve outcomes, and support those who are moving out of poverty.

One Body Collaboratives (OBC) is the managing organization for the community implementation, including creating a Community of Practice and implementing the Getting Ahead curriculum for individuals in poverty. One Body Collaboratives, through our Resource Coordination Center will provide ongoing support and resources for graduates of the Getting Ahead program.

## Community Need

We likely do not need to reiterate the well-known fact that there is a high level of distress and need in our community related to poverty, crime, jail & prison reentry, absent fathers, single parenting, multiple disparities including in the arenas of education, health, employment and housing, as well as multiple other social issues. Statistically, Rockford performs poorly with regards to socioeconomic measures.

Traditional governmental and social service agencies are making valiant efforts trying to address poverty and related social issues in our country and our community, yet the indicator needles are for the most part not moving in the right direction. Social distress and resource needs are increasing, while hope and available federal, state, and local governmental resources are decreasing.

Implementing a proven curriculum for those in poverty in our community will aid in assisting individuals to build their resources for a more prosperous life for themselves, their families and the community.

According to our Community Scorecard, the Rockford MSA had a poverty rate of 14.5% in 2017; ranking us at 37 out of 101. In comparison, the best community ranking was 8%; and to be a Top 25 community our ranking will need to be less than 13.8%. Conversely, in 2013 our rate was 16.5%, ranking us at 46 out of 101. We have the ability to achieve our goal of being in the Top 25 in this area by 2025, but we must be intentional about it.



## Project Components

### Bridges Out of Poverty Project Team

We have formed a Project Team which will oversee the ongoing implementation of the project. One Body Collaboratives will coordinate the ongoing meetings of this group. The Project Team will be responsible for the project at a high-level which includes data tracking, project finances, and the recruitment of key members in our community who will play an active role in the project. Our Project Team members represent key partners in our efforts and are listed on the inside cover of this report.

### Bridges Out of Poverty Community Trainings

Community Trainings will provide community leaders and interested community members with the understanding of the Complexities of Poverty, as well as how they can play a key role in the project. These training will also be available for employers who would like their staff to be introduced to these Bridges concepts and strategies that can be implemented within their respective organization. One Body Collaboratives Executive Director, Mary Cacioppi, has received her Certification as a Bridges Trainer to provide these Community Trainings.

Descriptions of the Training Sessions include:

#### Understanding the Complexities of Poverty (1-2 hours)

This session provides an overview of the Bridges Model as it relates to the Individual. The following concepts are reviewed: Social Cognitive Theory, Mental Models of Economic Class, the Causes of Poverty, Hidden Rule Among Economic Classes, the Eleven Resources, Registers of Language, Household Dynamics, and Creating Relationships & Tools.

#### Implementing the Bridges Model Within Your Organization (1-2 hours)

This session walks an organization through the Bridges Model as it relates to an organization. This could be an agency, nonprofit, church, or business. Concepts that are reviewed include: Client Life Cycle, Organizational Impact on the Client (Changing Behavior vs. Changing Rapport), the Theory of Change, Stages of Change and Motivation, Institutional Resources, Poverty Research Continuum/Policy & Procedure.

#### Implementing Bridges as a Community Collaborative (1-2 hours)

This session discusses the Bridges Model as a community wide comprehensive approach to reducing poverty. An overview of the following is provided: Getting Ahead curriculum series, Staying Ahead Network, Bridges Steering Committee and Community of Practice, and Influencing Policies to Remove Barriers at the local, state and national level.

To schedule any of these trainings, please contact Mary Cacioppi at [mary.cacioppi@onebodycollaboratives.org](mailto:mary.cacioppi@onebodycollaboratives.org).

## Community of Practice Implementation

The Community of Practice provides a platform for us to bring key community leaders together to reduce poverty in a comprehensive way. Bridges brings people from all sectors and economic classes together to improve job retention rates, build resources, improve outcomes, and support those who are moving out of poverty. The goals of creating a Community of Practice are to:

- move individuals from poverty to self-sufficiency
- reduce social costs to crime, poor health and welfare
- strengthen educational attainment and job skill
- improve on-the-job productivity
- develop and improve practices for the delivery of services within our community to those who are under resourced
- address long-standing systemic challenges to the barriers in the community for those in poverty

The Bridges Out of Poverty model is currently used in 35 states and 7 countries. There are currently 33 communities across the world that have established Communities of Practice. Our Community of Practice will meet on a quarterly basis in 2021.

A graphic that depicts the sectors as well as the communication that takes place among members of the Community of Practice follows:



## Getting Ahead in a Just Getting by World Curriculum



Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World is a 10-week curriculum that helps individuals in poverty build their resources for a more prosperous life for themselves, their families, and their communities. Getting Ahead classes will help our community members in poverty move from poverty to self-sufficiency. It is a proven curriculum currently being used in 46 states and 5 countries with over 80,000 graduates.

The Getting Ahead curriculum facilitates knowledge gains about poverty and how to begin to “get ahead” when living in poverty. Participants leave the program with more knowledge about how to avoid financial predators, what kind of rent they can afford, and what kind of interest they can legally be charged. They are leaving with increased knowledge of themselves and the resources they need to move forward economically and with an individualized plan for beginning to increase their resources.

Our goal is to have (10) sites host Getting Ahead classes in 2021. One Body Collaboratives will provide the backbone structure and support for these classes and will also track all Getting Ahead participants over the course of two years to measure the results of the program.

## Staying Ahead Network



When offering Getting Ahead classes to people in poverty, a promise is also made that the sponsor and the community will provide long-term support while graduates are building resources and transition out of poverty.

One Body Collaboratives, through its Resource Coordination Center will provide that ongoing support for graduates of the program and will establish a network of mentors to be connected to Getting Ahead graduates. This will ensure that we are increasing access to resources to those who need it the most.

Each graduate will also be paired with a Mentor who can provide them with a positive relationship and ongoing support for up to one year.

There have been a number of studies of the Getting Ahead curriculum and its impact on communities, the research team doing this work agrees that Getting Ahead is progressing toward evidence-based status.

## Workforce Stability

Instability is a measure of diversity in the workplace. Low-wage workers can experience personal instability that leads to absenteeism, health problems, and violations of workplace expectations, all of which decreases morale, attention to work, and job performance.

The goals of the Workforce Stability program is to:

- Reduce turnover and increase productivity
- Improve employee relationships
- Create systems change within an organization to improve working conditions for the under resourced worker
- Increase stability for employee and employer

The Workplace Stability component has two main focus areas: educating employers on the Complexities of Poverty and providing the Getting Ahead in the Workplace curriculum to under resourced workers. These areas are further defined here:

### Workplace Community Trainings

These trainings are provided directly at workplaces to the leadership/HR/management level staff. These trainings help all levels of staff understand the diversity of economic class in the workplace and many times leads to changes within the workplace to better support the under resourced workers.

### Getting Ahead in the Workplace Curriculum

Getting Ahead in the Workplace is a 10-week curriculum that helps under-resources workers gain stability to become more productive employees. Our goal is to have (10) sites host Getting Ahead classes in 2021. We are seeking employers such as manufacturers, health systems, hospitality industry, call centers, etc. that have a high volume of entry level, low wage workers. Typically, these are workers who need more stability in their life to help them become more productive in their workplace. One Body Collaboratives will provide the backbone structure and support for these classes and will also track all Getting Ahead participants over the course of two years to measure the results of the program.

Getting Ahead in the Workplace provides a community- and relationship-based approach to stable employment for low-wage, entry-level employees and people in employee development programs. The goal is to engage employees, their families, and volunteers as problem solvers who work shoulder to shoulder to create communities where everyone can live well.

Getting Ahead in the Workplace certified facilitators help under resourced individuals:

- Stabilize and take charge of their lives
- Self-assess their resources and make plans to build them
- Develop mental models to investigate poverty's impact on themselves and their community
- Create new future stories and build resources for a better life and community

## Project Support

We are grateful to the following organizations who have provided funding to support this project over the past two years:

Alpine Kiwanis  
Christ Lutheran, Belvidere  
City of Belvidere  
Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, Dr. Louis & Violet Rubin Fund  
Crusader Clinic  
Evangelical Covenant Church  
Gorman & Company  
Kiwanis Club of Rockford  
Our Saviors Lutheran Church  
State of Illinois Charitable Trust  
Winnebago County  
Wintrust

## For More Information

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[www.ahaprocess.com](http://www.ahaprocess.com)

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